



Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

**THIS FORM MUST BE COMPLETELY FILLED IN**

**Follow these procedures:** If requested by your instructor, please include an assignment cover sheet. This will become the first page of your assignment. In addition, your assignment header should include your last name, first initial, course code, dash, and assignment number. This should be left justified, with the page number right justified. For example:

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**Save a copy of your assignments:** You may need to re-submit an assignment at your instructor's request. Make sure you save your files in accessible location.

**Academic integrity:** All work submitted in each course must be your own original work. This includes all assignments, exams, term papers, and other projects required by your instructor. Knowingly submitting another person's work as your own, without properly citing the source of the work, is considered plagiarism. This will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the work submitted or for the entire course. It may also result in academic dismissal from the University.

**EDU7702-8**

**Dr. Mark Kelso**

**Online Learning Communities**

**Activity #6: NCU Concept Paper  
Template and Best Practices**

**Comments:**

**Faculty Use Only**

<Faculty comments here>

Hi Michael,

Outstanding work. Very well written and presented. Looks like you have a good take on what will be required for your CP. The purpose of this paper was to compare and contrast the expectations for each approach (quant. and Qual.) as presented in the Concept Paper Template.

This assignment is valuable in that you are exposed to the NCU CPT. As I previously mentioned in your last assignment, NCU highly recommends that all EDD's utilize a case study. I made some very valuable comments below that I think you should keep in mind. Again, I see no reason to deduct points, so your score is 10 points. Please let me know if you have any questions.

<Faculty Name>Kelso <Grade Earned>10.0 <Writing Score>3.0 <Date Graded>6/2/14

### Concept Paper Template and Best Practices

This paper aims to: (a) discuss the main components of Northcentral University's Concept Paper Template (CPT), (b) discern between qualitative and quantitative template expectations, and finally (c) discuss best practices for a qualitative approach to the proposed research. The CPT provides the content for the Dissertation Proposal, and ultimately the framework for how the Dissertation Manuscript will be written ("Concept," 2013b). The concept paper is the foundation from which the dissertation plan is created ("Applied," 2013a). The key elements of the CPT include the topic introduction, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, hypothesis, literature review, and research method. The CPT provides students with the organization and format in which to properly align the research problem, purpose, and design ("Concept," 2013b). [Excellent intro.](#)

#### Components of the Concept Paper Template

Concept papers are "summaries of projects or issues that reflect the interests, experience and expertise of the writer..." (Concept papers: What they are and how to write them?, 2014, para. 1). The sole purpose of the Concept Paper Template (CPT) is to communicate and ensure the proper alignment of the research problem, purpose, and research design ("Concept," 2013b). Northcentral University's CPT has six main components and several subsections, which guide and inform students on the logical flow of information, organization, and document format expectations ("Concept," 2013b). The CPT headings that will be discussed here after include: (a) introduction, (b) definition of key terms, (c) review of the literature, and (d) research methods. The last two headings serve to provide the references and appendix, which should include the main ideas and results forming the basis of the literature review ("Applied," 2013a). Finally, in this section an explanation of the role qualitative and quantitative research designs

have on each particular section appropriate to the CPT will be discussed. [OK. Remember that there are two different milestone documents, one for EDD's and one for Ph.D's. There are small differences but a lot of the content is the same...literally, that is.](#)

## Introduction

The first main heading is the introduction and consists of several parts, which include (a) the statement of the problem, (b) purpose of the study, (c) research question(s), and (d) the hypothesis. The purpose statement, research question(s), and hypothesis serve to reflect on the research methodology and design, while the introduction and statement of the problem serve to provide a foundation from which the study is proposed ("Introduction," 2014). Additionally, the problem statement should include what is known about the topic and what is still lacking in research.

**Reference to research design.** The introduction and statement of the problem do not reference research methodology. However, the purpose statement, which is a subsection of the introduction, should identify whether the research method is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method ("Concept," 2013b). Depending on which methodology is being selected will depend on how the purpose statement is written. The purpose statement will reflect on the research question(s), which will identify the research variables or phenomenon ("Concept," 2013b). The research question(s) identified in the purpose statement must be distinct and answerable ("Applied," 2013a; "Concept," 2013b). In a qualitative study the purpose statement includes the research variables, which focus on a single phenomenon. Qualitative research questions are often open-ended and describe the methodology of the research design. In a quantitative study the focus is placed on the variables, such as with sample populations and how they will be measured. Similarly, quantitative research questions must be answerable and specifically based

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**Comment [1]:** Do not forget to use a colon.

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**Comment [2]:** Your introduction cannot be longer than 2 pages.

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**Comment [3]:** Your problem statement cannot be longer than 300 words.

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**Comment [4]:** A definite must...and needs to further explain the selected method...e.g. experimental, case study, embedded, etc.

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**Comment [5]:** Actually, a quantitative study has the variables. There are no variables mentioned in a qualitative study.

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**Comment [6]:** This is correct.

on data collected. In a mixed method design the purpose statement will include both qualitative and quantitative reflections (“Applied,” 2013a).

### Defining Key Terms

The next main heading is definition of key terms, which is comprised of terms and concepts unique to the proposed research topic. In this section, key vocabulary is defined and explained serving to build a common understanding among readers about the topic and related terms. In this section key terms may include expanded definitions specifically related to the study and research design (“Applied,” 2013a). This section may not inform on any other component of the CPT, however may serve to clarify and describe new information and terms related to the research design (“Concept,” 2013b). [Think about terms that are not common. That is what you want to include. You can have over 10 or even 1 key term.](#)

### Brief Review of the Literature

The next part of the CPT provides readers with a **brief literature review** of the topic, which summarizes and evaluates the existing knowledge. The purpose of the literature review “is to familiarize readers with the state of the knowledge base and how this knowledge base has been developed” (“Introduction,” 2014, slide 7). According to Machi and McEvoy (2009) the main purpose of the literature review is to formulate a theoretical position on the topic “by building a case from credible evidence based on previous research” (p. 4). The literature review does not reference research methodology and should not focus on “specific study designs [unless] directly relevant” (“Applied,” 2013a). [Be sure to keep your sources at 80% within the last 5 years.](#)

### Research Method

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**Comment [7]:** You need at least 2000 words.  
Your literature review will be 40 pages minimum!

The final main heading, the research method section, serves to clearly describe the research design and consists of three subsections, which include (a) operational definitions of possible variables found in the research study, (b) means of measurement, and (c) a summary. Northcentral University requires the research method be identified and explained, along with a rationale for the selection. Additionally, the CPT should include the proposed data collection and analysis procedures (“Introduction,” 2014, slide 5).

**Reference to research design.** The research method section should “provide an overview of the proposed research method...that will be used to answer the research questions” (“Applied,” 2013a, p. 10). In a quantitative study the research method could be correlational, quasi-experimental, or ex-post-facto. In a qualitative study the research methodology could include a case study or phenomenology. During the development of the research method the dissertation chair and appropriate research should be consulted to ensure the “proposed research design meets the goals of an applied study” (“Applied,” 2013a, p. 11). The inclusion of an operational definition of variables section should identify major variables related to the hypothesis and include a brief description of how each will be defined in a quantitative or mixed study. Conversely, this section should be eliminated in qualitative studies. The measurement section, a subsection of the research method, provides a brief explanation of how “data will be collected, measured, and analyzed” (p. 12). In a qualitative study, the measurement section should include a description of the proposed data collection instrument and how concepts, if any, will be coded (p. 12). Finally, a summary should be included briefly reviewing and highlighting key points from the research method, purpose statements, and overall research plan (“Concept,” 2013b).

### Best Practices for a Qualitative Approach

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**Comment [8]:** You also need to explain why your selection is better than the other two. GS will look for that.

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**Comment [9]:** And these key words are to be mentioned in your purpose statement.

The concept paper requires an introduction of the proposed topic including background information, concepts reported in subsequent sections, and a brief rationale for conducting research in this area of study. Within the introduction are subsections, which for a qualitative study should include the statement of the problem, purpose statement, and research questions. Although, quantitative studies require a hypothesis section it is deleted from a qualitative study (“Applied,” 2013a).

The statement of the problem does not directly mention a research methodology; however, it is the basis for formulating the problem and research design. The problem statement should be articulated and written well, with several revisions possible to ensure a clear alignment with subsequent sections. A research worthy problem statement and design is necessary to justify the proposed research study (“Applied,” 2013a). [Think alignment. Intro>problem statement>purpose statement>research questions. All need to align.](#)

The purpose statement should be [one paragraph length](#) and describe the intent of the study (“Concept,” 2013b; “Applied,” 2013a). In the purpose statement the research method and design should be clearly stated and describe the overarching goal (“Concept,” 2013b). For [qualitative research the purpose statement should depict the variables](#) of a “single phenomenon, concept, or idea that will be studied” (“Applied,” 2013a, p. 8). Additionally, “participants, data sources, [and] geographic location of study is identified” and included within the purpose statement of the concept paper (“Concept,” 2013b, p. 3). [Yes!](#)

In a qualitative study, following the purpose statement in the concept paper are the research question(s). However, it is recommended before listing the research questions that an [introduction is provided](#) (“Concept,” 2013b). Research questions should be “distinct and *answerable*” and related to the phenomenon (“Concept,” 2013b, p. 4). Additionally, in a

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**Comment [10]:** True...but it is actually a fairly long paragraph. You can use two paragraphs, but the best ones I have seen are only one paragraph.

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**Comment [11]:** I am not big of you using the word “variables” with a qualitative research method. I think there is a more appropriate word for what you are referring to. I know that the sources may state this, but I for one do not see it that way.

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**Comment [12]:** Go for three basic sentences.

qualitative study the research questions “should be open-ended and reflect the nature of the qualitative design”, avoiding possible yes and no answers (p. 4).

The definition of key terms and the brief review of the literature sections do not include information about the proposed research methodology. It is not best practice to include discussion or definitions about the proposed research method or design study (“Concept,” 2013b; “Applied,” 2013a). The literature review should include the use of themes or subtopics as headings and be “organized into a coherent narrative discussion” (“Concept,” 2013b, p. 6). The focus of the literature review should be on the primary concepts of knowledge in the field and describe areas of controversy (“Concept,” 2013b, p. 6). It is best practice to focus the literature review on related concepts and ideas found within the literature, “rather than on researchers and specific study designs” (p. 6).

Following the literature review section is the research method, which includes two subsections. It is best practice to use the subheadings provided by Northcentral University’s Concept Paper Template (CPT), however if additional subheadings are required “the dissertation proposal template Ch. 3 subheading wording/organization/format should be followed” (“Concept,” 2013b, p. 7). It is important to note that the concept paper does not require a detailed description of the research design (“Concept,” 2013b; “Applied,” 2013a) and should begin with identifying the research method as a qualitative design. This section should include sources, which support the proposed research design and appropriateness of using a case study. In addition to providing information about the research design, a clear rationale supporting the research “question[s], the particular data gathering techniques, and data analysis should be provided” (“Concept,” 2013b, p. 8). Furthermore, in a qualitative study the operational

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**Comment [13]:** I highly recommend that you use subheadings and make sure that you include them in the TOC.



definition of variables section is omitted therefore, leaving the measurement and summary subsections.

The measurement section, which is a subsection of the research method, briefly describes in greater detail the proposed data collection instrument(s). For qualitative research, information regarding the instrument should include the number of questions, response expectations, and a short description on how the measurement tool will be confirmed. Lastly, included in the measurement subsection should be a description of how the data will be collected, and the ethical procedures established for protecting sensitive and identifiable information (“Concept,” 2013b).

[Reference List?](#)

[What about the Annotated Bibliography?](#)

### Conclusion

The purpose of Northcentral University’s Concept Paper Template (CPT) is to offer students a guide and standard for research writing. The concept paper establishes the structure and research content for the Dissertation Proposal and Dissertation Manuscript. The research method and design is not the focus of the concept paper, but includes significant research information to allow the dissertation committee to determine if the study is feasible and appropriate. The CPT provides important information and best practices, which informs upon one of three research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The CPT expectations change depending on the chosen research method however continues to provide appropriate directions for developing a valid concept paper.

[For future reference. After your CP is approved the following sections should not be changed\(but make any changes that GS wants you to obviously\):](#)

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**Comment [14]:** This is correct.

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**Comment [15]:** And GS

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. Problem Statement](#)
- [3. Purpose Statement](#)
- [4. Any section that is required in the Ph.D. CP template](#)
- [5. Research Questions](#)
- [6. Def. of Key terms.](#)
- [7. Your lit review goes to 40 pages \(this can include the summary\)](#)
- [8. Your research method section will have additional information. Some introductory CP material will remain the same.](#)
- [9. After your CP is approved, you will no longer need to include the annotated bibliography.](#)

[Please see my comment below.](#)

## References

| Concept Papers: What they are and how to write them? (2014, June 1). *What Are Concept Papers and How to Write Them?* [web site]. Retrieved from <http://custompapers.com/essays-articles/concept-papers/>

Machi, L. A. & McEvoy, B. T. (2009). *The literature review*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Northcentral University (2013a). *Applied degree guidebook*. Prescott Valley, AZ: Author. Retrieved from [http://learners.ncu.edu/ncu\\_diss/default.aspx?attendance=Y](http://learners.ncu.edu/ncu_diss/default.aspx?attendance=Y)

Northcentral University (2013b). *Concept paper template*. Prescott Valley, AZ: Author. Retrieved from [http://learners.ncu.edu/ncu\\_diss/default.aspx?attendance=Y](http://learners.ncu.edu/ncu_diss/default.aspx?attendance=Y)

Northcentral University (2014). *Introduction to concept paper development and the University review process*. [Power point]. Prescott Valley, AZ: Author. Retrieved from [http://learners.ncu.edu/ncu\\_diss/default.aspx?attendance=Y](http://learners.ncu.edu/ncu_diss/default.aspx?attendance=Y)

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